

THE VICE PRESIDENT
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EXCERPTS OF REMARKS FOR
VICE PRESIDENT GEORGE BUSH
- ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY STATEMENT
ERIE METROPARK, MICHIGAN
WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 31, 1988

I am here today to talk about building a better America. I am here to make a case I feel very strongly about -- and that is the case for a cleaner environment. It is a case based not only on our own health and safety, and not only on the obligation we have to future generations. It is based on the knowledge that successful economic development and environmental protection go hand in hand. You cannot have one without the other.

This summer has been full of warnings about the condition of our environment. Medical waste has washed up not only on our ocean beaches, but on the shores of this very lake over in Cleveland. Ozone levels and accompanying respiratory problems have been frighteningly high. Even the exceptionally hot weather -- if only symbolically -- has been seen as a portent of things to come.

1988 is the year the earth spoke back. Our land, water, and soil support a remarkable range of human activities; but they can only take so much. We must remember to treat them not as a given, but as a gift.

I am an environmentalist: always have been, from my earliest days as a Congressman, when I first chaired a House Task Force on Earth Resources and Population. And I always will be, to my last days as President of this great and beautiful country. That's not inconsistent with being a businessman; nor is it with being a conservative. In fact, it is an essential part of the thinking that should guide either one.

Today, I'd like to begin to outline what I'd do about the environment; my plan for how we as a nation -- and as a people -- can lead the world to a new recognition of the importance of the environment.

Some say that these problems are too big -- that it's impossible for an individual, or even a nation as great as ours, to solve the problem of global warming, or the loss of forests, or the deterioration of our oceans. My response is simple: it can be done. And we must do it.

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Let's not forget all that we have accomplished since America first concentrated its attention on preserving the environment -- under a Republican administration -- back in 1970. Lead levels in our air have declined by 87%, sulfur dioxide levels by 37%, and particulates by 23%. 50% more Americans have adequate public sewage treatment systems.

Some of our most notable achievements have sprung from the leadership of Michigan's Governors -- men whose vision was ahead of their time, men like William Milliken and George Romney.

We need look no further for evidence of progress than to this very lake, once pronounced dead, and now home to one of the finest walleye fisheries in the world. All of this progress has occurred while America's population -- and what that population produces -- have been growing.

Today we face a different set of problems. They are complex. Many are international in scope. But with the right leadership, they can be solved.

We should be clear: The solution begins with the individual. Every family in America, from the White House to the house on the corner of Main Street, from the smallest apartment to the most expansive farm, makes choices every day, and those choices have an effect on our environment. But we cannot forget the effect of the choices we make.

Two years ago, a CBS-New York Times survey found that two-thirds of the American people felt that "protecting the environment is so important that standards and requirements cannot be too high."

But what of our personal standards?

Two weeks ago, I called for a "kinder, gentler nation". That means, in part, a nation in which all of us treat the environment with greater reverence and respect.

But some issues cannot be solved by individuals alone. On these, there is a role for government. Some issues involve competing local, regional, or even national interests. On these, there is a need for leadership. Let me tell you how I would lead as President.

I would start by integrating environmental considerations into all policy decisions -- from foreign to farm to economic policy; from the education of our children to the research and development of our scientists. And I would immediately begin to address some of the major challenges that confront us.

This summer, we have seen many reports about the so-called "greenhouse effect." As the nations of the world grow, they burn increasing amounts of fossil fuels. That gives off carbon

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dioxide, which acts as a blanket insulating the earth and thus could contribute -- the theory goes -- to an increase in the temperature of the atmosphere. The problem is compounded as the earth loses some of its valuable forests -- because trees naturally use carbon dioxide. So when we lose forests, we lose part of the answer to global warming.

One critical answer to this problem is conservation -- and that will be a priority of my administration. Another, frankly, is nuclear power -- although a precondition of its continued use is safe operation of plants and safe disposal of nuclear waste.

The problem, however, is international in scope; unilateral action by the United States alone will not solve it. In fact, some say the problem is just too big to be solved. That the world is growing too much and too fast.

I say they are wrong. Those who think we're powerless to do anything about the "greenhouse effect" are forgetting about the "White House effect." As President, I intend to do something about it.

In my first year in office, I will convene a global conference on the environment at the White House. It will include the Soviets, the Chinese, the developing world as well as the developed. All nations will be welcome -- and indeed, all nations will be needed.

The agenda will be clear. We will talk about global warming. We will talk about acid rain. We will talk about saving our oceans, and preventing the loss of tropical forests. And we will act.

These issues know no ideology, and no political boundaries. They are of equal importance to the developing world and to the developed. Just as they are the common heritage of the past and present, they are the common agenda of the future.

Those who doubt the possibility of international agreement -- forged by America's leadership -- can look to our recent experience. Last year, we took the lead in developing a historic accord to cut worldwide production of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) by 50 percent. CFCs contribute to the depletion of the ozone layer -- and to the "greenhouse effect". This agreement, called Montreal Protocol, represents one of the first times that the nations of the world have joined together to meet a common environmental challenge.

We now have a second example. We are close to reaching agreement with other nations on a protocol to limit emissions of nitrogen oxides. These gases, NOx for short, contribute to the problem of acid rain. Let me state my position clearly: I believe this protocol should be signed by the U.S. and implemented around the world.

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Acid rain is a problem that will require both international and national cooperation. Last year, I had a hand in securing an agreement with our neighbors in Canada to undertake a \$2.5 billion clean coal technology development effort on the problem. This technology is vital, because our most abundant fossil fuel must retain a key place in our economy.

On the question of acid rain, the time for study alone has passed. We know enough now to begin taking steps to limit future damage; action we take today -- even as scientific inquiry continues -- is an insurance policy against future disaster.

As President, I will ask for a program to cut millions of tons of sulfur dioxide emissions by the year 2000, and to significantly reduce nitrogen oxide emissions as well. I will work out the exact amounts and the exact methodology with the Congress. But we must have a clear commitment to emissions reductions, on a clear timetable.

The burden of achieving these emissions must be shared equitably; no one region or group should be hit unfairly with the cost of addressing a problem that affects all of us. But the waiting period for action on acid rain is over, and I -- as President -- will be ready to move.

Curbing acid rain is just one element in achieving cleaner air and cleaner water. Earlier this week, EPA moved ahead with mandated sanctions against an area of the country -- Los Angeles -- that is not meeting the standards of the Clean Air Act. This shows dramatically the need to press ahead with the battle for clean air. I support a reauthorization, correction and strengthening, of our clean air laws -- with realistic timetables and tools to get the job done.

Clean air is only one part of the picture. What about clean water? Groundwater provides more than half of the American public with its drinking water -- and 97% of rural households. And yet it is threatened -- by toxic wastes, by pesticides and by fertilizers.

Too many towns in America have had a nightmare with hazardous waste that is disposed of improperly. Well, I plan to attack the toxic waste menace with every ounce of energy I have, and with every enforcement tool at my disposal.

Superfund has the money. But we can use it faster, and more efficiently. We can make greater use of the EPA's emergency authority to step in and clean up immediately.

We can cut the red tape that slows down a program that, frankly, was written by lawyers, and it seems for lawyers.

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Right now, the incentives often work against those private parties who agree to settle with the EPA and clean up waste sites themselves. Voluntary cleanups should be encouraged rather than impeded.

For those who don't cooperate, EPA should use its authority to sue them for triple damages. Our guiding principle should be simple: those who are responsible for the dumping should be responsible for the cleanup. Polluters should pay.

When America moves into the 90's, I want to insure that "zero tolerance" is applied not only to those who poison our children's minds with drugs, but to those who poison our water with toxic chemicals.

We have some fine and extremely able public servants enforcing our environmental laws today -- including our outstanding EPA Administrator, Lee Thomas. But lest there be any doubt about my intention to vigorously execute our environmental laws, I make the following commitment to you today: I will appoint the finest, most qualified individuals in the land to serve in my Environmental Protection Agency. They will have my support. They will have my ear. They will have my confidence. And they will have my mandate: go after the polluters.

Just a few miles from here, I'm told, is an environmental success story. The Pointe Mouillee wetlands. I don't have to tell those of you who are hunters and fishermen how important wetlands are as a habitat for fish, ducks, geese, and other waterfowl. But they also help control flooding by serving as a "sponge," and they help "recycle" water by filtering out wastes. Wetlands are a vital environmental and recreational resource -- and they are at risk.

We have been losing wetlands at a rate of almost a half-million acres per year -- although this should be reduced with the conservation-oriented "swamp buster" provisions in last year's farm bill. Much of the loss comes from inevitable pressure for development, and many of our wetlands are on private property. But I believe we must act.

We must bring the private and public sectors together, at the local and state levels, to find ways to conserve wetlands. One state has a policy of "no net loss" of wetlands, and it has worked -- through mitigating the effects of development, preserving wetlands where possible, and sometimes even creating new wetlands. And that state is not a no growth, no development state.

I believe this should be our national goal -- no net loss of wetlands. We can't afford to lose the half of America's wetlands that still remains.

I want to increase the recreational opportunities provided by the great American outdoors. And in that task, I will pay special attention to the condition and management of our parks. I will look for ways to expand them, to link our cities with greenways along abandoned railroad tracks, and refresh them with urban parks.

I will look carefully, and favorably, at many of the recommendations of the President's Commission on the Outdoors.

Consider, for example the Land and Water Conservation Fund. It was used to purchase much of this very park. It has been a success, and I believe it should continue to give Americans the chance to enjoy -- and to use -- land and water resources like this one.

I mentioned the Republican role in environmentalism, and no Republican President personified that role better than Teddy Roosevelt. "This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in," Teddy Roosevelt once said, "unless it is a good place for all of us to live in."

Those words are no less true today. In this world of rapid communications, growing population, and global environmental problems, we are more tightly bound than ever -- not only in this country, but in this world.

And that explains the real challenge facing conservationists as we work to build a better future -- to bring people together, because the task involves all of us.

Our actions as individuals can affect our common destiny. We Americans produce 160 million tons of garbage every year. We can produce less. We can recycle. We can waste less. Japan's recycling rate is 50%, yet some feel the EPA's national goal of a 25% reduction in waste is excessive. I'd like to see us exceed that goal in my first term.

We consume mountains of plastic packages, waste millions of gallons of water, and produce barrel upon barrel of hazardous waste. We can waste less, and reduce pollutants at their source. The technology is there, what is needed now is the will.

We can instill a new spirit in the people of this country. A new appreciation for the land and water. A conservation ethic.

There are some natural allies in this cause, and one task of our next President is to rally them to a common purpose.

Tom Washington, through the Michigan United Conservation Clubs, you have tied together the interests of sportsmen and environmentalists.

As President, I want to build further on the coalition you have spawned here. We as Americans should recognize how much conservation can unite us.

Sportsmen know how much preserving the habitat of our wildlife means to their continued enjoyment of what nature has to offer. But the stalwarts of the environmental movement should recognize, as well, that they are in common league with families across America who don't even think of themselves as environmentalists. They think of themselves as concerned citizens, as lovers of sport and play, and, of course, just as Americans.

We've talked of practicing "the Politics of Inclusion" in the Republican Party. We should bring this same politics of inclusion to the cause of protecting America's environment. I believe that I have the experience and leadership to bring Americans together.

It's been said that we are all on one small ship on this planet. That ship is travelling fast, moving -- potentially -- to a brighter future. Its condition demands our urgent attention. Its salvation can be our common triumph.

Thank you very much.
